

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated October 16, 2007. Claims 11 to 15 and 21 are in the application, with Claims 1 to 5 having been canceled and Claim 21 having been added. Claim 11 is the only independent claim. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The Abstract has been amended to correspond more closely with the current language of independent Claim 11.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 11, 12 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Publication No. 2001/0006400 (Kubo '400). Claims 3, 4, 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Kubo '400 in view of U.S. Publication No. 2001/0012064 (Kubo '064). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention generally concerns selective access to a removable storage medium. A storage apparatus includes a first interface unit that has a first port for connection to a first external apparatus, and a second interface unit that has a second port for connection to a second external apparatus. A third interface unit is for connection to a removable storage medium.

According to one aspect of the invention, the second port is set in a disabled state responsive to a determination that the first external apparatus connected to the first port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit, and the first port is set in the disabled state responsive to a determination that the second external apparatus connected to the second port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit.

For example, in one sample embodiment described in the specification, a first PC and a second PC are respectively connected to an IEEE interface and a USB interface. Both seek to access a memory card via a memory card interface, and a control unit may selectively disable the ports based on which PC is capable of accessing the memory card via the memory card interface.

By virtue of this arrangement, it is ordinarily possible to reduce the possibility that two external apparatuses attempt to access the removable medium simultaneously, which can lead to inconsistent data.

Referring specifically to claim language, independent Claim 11 is directed to a storage apparatus. The apparatus includes a first interface unit for connection to a first external apparatus, the first interface unit having a first port to which the first external apparatus is connectable and disconnectable and through which the first interface unit connects to the first external apparatus. The apparatus also includes a second interface unit for connection to a second external apparatus, the second interface unit having a second port to which the second external apparatus is connectable and disconnectable and through which the second interface unit connects to the second external apparatus. The apparatus further includes a third interface unit for connection to a removable storage medium. In addition, the apparatus includes a control unit that controls the first port and the second port. If the first interface unit detects that the first external apparatus is connected to the first port, the control unit determines whether the first external apparatus is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit. If the second interface unit detects that the second external apparatus is connected to the second

port, the control unit determines whether the second external apparatus is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit. The control unit sets the second port in a disabled state responsive to a determination that the first external apparatus connected to the first port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit, and the control unit sets the first port in the disabled state responsive to a determination that the second external apparatus connected to the second port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of the present invention, and in particular is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the feature of setting a second port in a disabled state responsive to a determination that a first external apparatus connected to a first port is capable of accessing a removable storage medium connected to a third interface unit, and setting the first port in the disabled state responsive to a determination that a second external apparatus connected to the second port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit.

As understood by Applicant, Kubo '400 is directed a CPU which accesses multiple slots in a digital camera at regular intervals to detect whether first and second memory cards are mounted in first and second slots. If both cards are mounted in the respective slots, the CPU selects one slot for access according to one of three modes - a fixed mode, a priority mode, and a manual operation mode. See Kubo '400, Abstract.

Pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, in the Response to Arguments section, assert that Kubo '400 (Figure 8) discloses setting a second port in a disable state responsive

to access of a removable medium through a first port by a first external apparatus, and setting the first port in a disabled state responsive to access of the removable medium through the second port by a second external apparatus.

However, Kubo '400 does not disclose setting a first or second port in a disabled state in accordance with a determination of whether an external apparatus connected to each port is capable of accessing a removable medium connected to a third interface. In particular, Kubo '400 simply determines whether a memory card is attached to a first or second port. See Kubo '400, paragraphs [0057] to [0063]. Even though Kubo '400's digital camera may include three or more ports, Kubo '400 is not seen to disclose or suggest determining whether either memory card (the Office Action's "external apparatus") is capable of accessing a removable medium connected to a separate (i.e., third) interface.

Moreover, pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action assert that according to Kubo '400's Figure 8, "if [the] priority slot, first port, is settled to be accessed, [the] second slot is disabled. If second slot, second port, is settled to be accessed, [the] first slot is disable[d]."

However, as seen by Applicant, Kubo '400's Figure 8 does not disclose disabling of ports. Rather, Kubo 400's Figure 8 simply describes the process of trying to save data in the second memory card if the first memory card is too full. In particular, the accompanying text states:

On the other hand, where there is not sufficient memory in the memory card mounted in the priority slot, the CPU 17 advances to step S65, where it checks the available memory in the memory card mounted in the second slot, which is different from the priority slot. Where there is sufficient memory available in the memory card mounted in the second slot, the CPU 17 sets the second slot as the slot to be

accessed in step S66. Where the card mounted in the second slot also lacks sufficient memory, the CPU 17 advances to step S67, and since the picked-up image may not be stored anywhere, an error routine is carried out. Kubo '400, paragraph [0077].

Thus, Kubo'400 is not seen to suggest disabling ports, much less setting a second port in a disabled state responsive to a determination that a first external apparatus is capable of accessing a removable storage medium connected to a third interface unit, and setting a first port in the disabled state responsive to a determination that the second external apparatus connected to the second port is capable of accessing the removable storage medium connected to the third interface unit.

Kubo '064 has been reviewed and is not seen to remedy the above-noted deficiencies of Kubo '400.

Therefore, independent Claim 11 is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

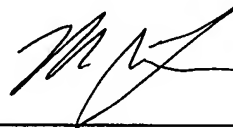
The other claims in the application are each dependent from Claim 11 and are therefore believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Turning to a formal matter, an Information Disclosure Statement accompanies this paper. Consideration of the cited art is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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